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THE BLACK CRUSADER
AND OTHER POEMS OF HORROR AND FANTASY

by

JESSICA AMANDA SALMONSON

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jessica Amanda Salmonson is a member of Science Fiction Writers of America and the Feminist Writers Guild. She edited the anthology Amazons! from DAW Books, New York, 1979, and recently finished her first novel The Vital Flame: Warrior of Jendkhana which will eventually become a trilogy. With the aid of sundry hands, she publishes Windhaven: A Matriarchal Magazine. A native of The Great Northwest, she spends too much time watching samarai films but is otherwise kept on a chain attached to her typewriter.

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Dedication:

To Stephanie Stearns, who helped me long ago. Blessings.

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FINE FETTERED FRIEND

A ghost haunts these halls
many have seen him
though nobody knows his name
He's bound up in chains
and moans in great pain
my pitiful fine fettered friend.
He passes through walls
when taken by whim
and vanishes like a flame
But pops up again
you never know when
O pitiful fine fettered friend.

A commonplace haunting
it shouldn't see odd
I've heard of such things before
Yet some effects worsen
when viewed in the person
of that woeful fine fettered friend.
What could he be wanting
that keeps him from God
holding him here evermore
With chains loudly rattling
while ladies are prattling
'bout this woeful fine fettered friend.

A sort of affection
has grown up around
the spectre who wanders our home
We shan't exorcise him
or fear or despise him
that pitiful fine fettered friend.
He has no direction
no fate to be found
other than to faithfully roam
Up hallways and down
with a burdensome frown
our pitiful fine fettered friend.

RITES

A knife was held tight to my throat
While like some sacrificial goat
They bound me to an alter stone.
I pleaded to the cackling crone
Who litanied foul sorcery
But there was no mercy for me.

The men of this sabbath so black
Defiled me, helpless on my back,
As women dared suckle my breasts.
Deafened to my screams and protests
Their orgy went far into the night
Until the first hint of daylight.

The monotone canting had ceased
No motion, no sound in the least,
The crone held her dagger in air!
I cried out once in my despair
And prayed for this nightmare to depart.
As her dark blade rose from my heart
I knew my one hope was to find
That to his brides Satan was kind.

THE BEAST OF UNKNOWN HERITAGE

Visible in her eyes
is the wisdom of ancient Egypt,
spoiled regal beauty,
power.
Sinister is she,
praised and damned,
worshipped and feared since antiquity.
A creature descended
of some unknown
and cold blooded jungle killer:
the cat.

TERROR IN THE NIGHT

I see him in my darkest dream
     from which I wake to scream
Before his talons rake my back
Or drag me down in foul attack.
But someday I shall sleep too long
     my weariness so strong
The nightmare landscapes where I flee
Won't vanish from reality
And he will place his hands on me.

Tonight I'll dream that dream once more
     behind my bolted door
This time I think I won't awake
When virtue he aspires to take.
The dreamworld horror that haunts my rest
     tries his inhuman best
To despoil his chosen mate
So demon sperm can incupate
Until born through vaginal gate.

But if my flesh he dares to touch
     if breasts he dares to clutch
He'll capture more than his intent
Sorrowfully will lust be spent
For I can be a demon, too
     and do what demons do
He'll know of death, he'll know of fear
At point of knife or sword or spear
Than penetrates from ear to ear.

And then when slumber goes from me
     I'll know that I am free.

SUZANNE

Beneath her beautiful facade
Lurks the black soul of de Sade
(But even that fell villain
Felt compassion for his victims
And they died in ecstacy
Not in wasted, horrid sorrow.)

Painted boys and bargain harlots
Raise their heads in naked pride
At least they have one
to gaze down upon --
That evil lass-in-scarlet
That blood-encusted bride.

Oh hide, dear God,
She invades your citadel!
Oh run, dread Satan,
Or be usurped!
To arms, mankind,
Or walk as men no more!

And all good mothers
Who love your children
Rush and bolt your doors
For Death is a woman,
Personified, Incarnate,
Inflamed of bitter hate.

This whipper, flesh stripper,
Has only these desires:
The pleasure of self
The lessening of others
The destruction of all
Who would dare to love her.

But why rise in detestment
Of that which cannot be escaped?
For all will come to the knees of Death
And cry, "Take me, Mother of Darkness,
I am yours."
Death, I am yours.

THE BLACK CRUSADER

I asked a knight I chanced upon
(armored in iron was he)
"Dark Crusader, what has been done?
Tell your conquests to me."
He sat astride his steed of jet
as black as black can be
From the road where by chance we met
his face I could not see.

A voice of quiet thunder roared
and told me of his deed
"I have slain twelve thousand score
and each one from this steed
Fallen by my lance and sword
the worms found ample feed
No mercy am I famous for
no mercy do I plead."

Dually impressed, aghast,
I asked this knight his name
Such heroism unsurpassed
was surely matched by fame
But no name would the knight reveal
although I knew him at last breath
He raised his visor-mask of steel
Beneath? The grinning skull of death.

NEAR THE CRYPT

Near the river is a place where no man goes
High on the cliffs above where the water flows
And all the roads around of life are stripped.
Tales are told of how strange sounds the wind that blows
And shadows crawl when the moon eerily glows
Even the dogs and wolves by fear are gripped
at the cliffs situated near the crypt.

Years ago a man of no meager account
Scoffed the superstitious, bravely chose a mount
Briskly along bent roads his gelding clipped.
Later he was washed upon the river bank
The steed was found weeks later, mad, starved and lank
Perhaps that horse had thrown him, or he slipped
from the cliffs situated near the crypt.

That is but one record. There are many more
It would not be hard to chronical a score
Murdered in those hills, each their blood was sipped.
Then the demise of a child unleashed outrage
A tentative reprisal was soon engaged
So then into that tomb our hammers chipped
by the cliffs situated near the crypt.

The sepulcher was opened by time night came
Three of the bravest entered with torch aflame
"By God, this shack is empty!" one man quipped.
Indeed the ancient tomb had never been tried
Since the beast it was built for had never died
Then from our breasts our sanity was ripped
When we saw the thing that slithered and dripped
Climb the cliffs situated near the crypt!

THE ADORING WRAITH

I write to you, my secret heart,
With ink of squid and feather quill
Seated beneath this sooted sill
In eerie shadow, candle light,
And gloomy emptiness of will.

You came to me one sullen night
To take me in your arms and thrill
Me to my inner soul until
You knew my every curve and part
And took away the lonely chill.

Each night you'd come, and go again
To leave me sighing to your skill
Yet screaming silently and shrill
Deep inside me, leeched and drained,
With knowledge that your love would kill.

Then came that night of words that pained
More surely than if blood should spill
You feared I'd wane more pale and ill
This is goodbye, you said, and then:
No more my nights did passion fill.

TORSO

This is a torso
in case you didn't know
Take note that the torso is lacking of toes
or legs for that matter or arms or a nose
Where, I wonder, did the torso's head go?

The toes were wrapped in butcher paper
and buried in the clay
The feet were sealed in a gallon jar
and carefully hidden away
The first part of the legs, including the knees,
were put in a box and tossed in the trees
The second two halves, including the thighs,
were left in the sun and eaten by flies.

The hands were placed in plastic bags
and frozen in the fridge
The arms and elbows were tied up with string
and chucked over a bridge
The head was mailed to an African tribe
who shrank it so small that it's hard to describe
Now all that remains is the torso, it seems
How do you propose we dispose of the thing?

WERE TEDDY

Not every toy for girl or boy
is fun to own or share
One has need of blood for feed:
the cuddly, snuggly were-teddy bear.
This beast you see, cute as can be,
with children unaware
leaps up to bite necks in the night --
the huggable, lovable were-teddy bear.
Many a child bitten by wild
rat or racoon or hare
Today is alive, but fewer survive
the fangs of the cutsy-poo were-teddy bear.